

Middleborough Antiquarian

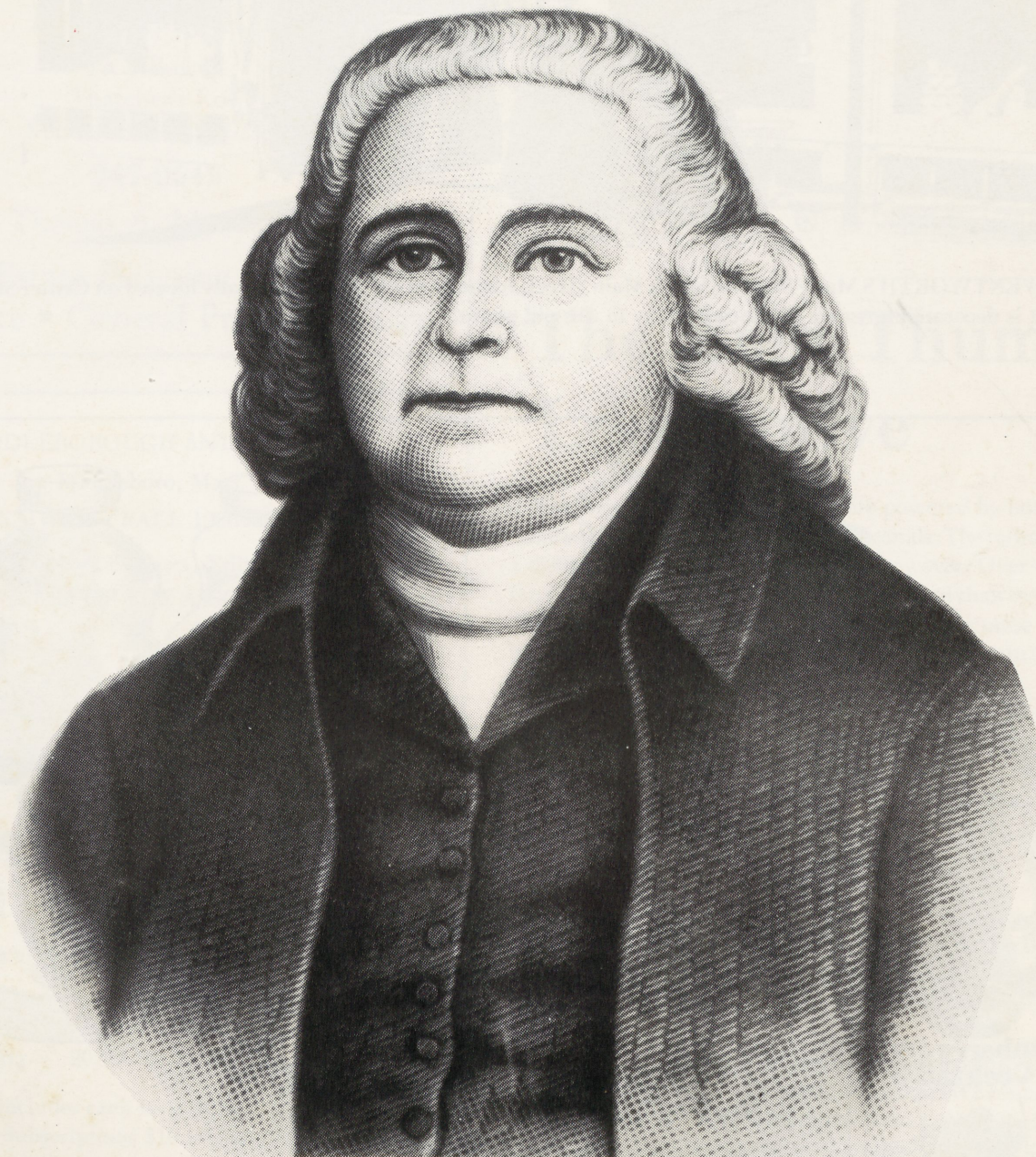
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MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.
Established 1922

\$3.50

VOLUME XXXIV

FALL 1996

NUMBER 1



IN HIS DIARY, Elder Isaac Backus recorded the fact that he had a "likeness" made for \$3.00 and later had his portrait painted. This picture is a copy of the likeness Weston used in his history of the town.



WENTWORTH'S Music Store on South Main Street, founded in 1918, was originally located on Center Street. It is decorated for some patriotic holiday in this old photo.

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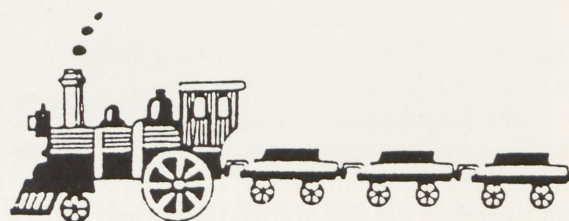
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Sincerely,
Robert M. Beals, President



The Tom Thumb Locomotive

The first American railroads were powered by horses, the same as wagons and even boats along canals. The railroads had a distinct advantage over the others, however. Over the rails the horses could pull 20 times more of a load than over a dirt road. Canal and railroad horses could pull the same weight, but the railroad cost much less to build and maintain than did the canals.

The Baltimore and Ohio railroad was the first public railway carrier in regular service in America. It was chartered on February 28, 1827.

In 1829, Baltimore businessmen and railroad directors met often as they grew more concerned about the progress of new railroads as well as canals. It was into one such meeting that Peter Cooper strode.

Peter Cooper, a merchant from New York City, had investments in Baltimore and thus he too was concerned. He told the directors he believed steam locomotion was the answer and that he would put together a working steam locomotive for testing on the rails.

The directors, feeling that they had nothing to lose, gave Mr. Cooper his chance. Peter Cooper, who owned a foundry and was known to be handy with tools, went to New York where he purchased a little steam engine with a cylinder 3¼" by 14½". Upon returning to Baltimore he built a boiler that was as big as an ordinary wash boiler of that time, and used two old musket barrels for boiler flues when iron pipes could not

Continued on Page 11

MIDDLEBOROUGH ANTIQUARIAN

Middleboro, Mass.

VOLUME XXXIV FALL 1996 NUMBER 1

Robert Barboza, Editor

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Who was Elder Backus?

By Warren and Marion Whipple

In the days of the American Revolution, the name of Elder Backus was known from Maine to Carolina. He was as famous as Thomas Jefferson. However, by the time Thomas Weston wrote the *History of the Town of Middleboro, Massachusetts*, the memory of Elder Backus' life and deeds had faded. Who was he? What did he do?

Brown University published a 3-volume annotated diary and biography of Elder Isaac Backus, edited by William G. McLaughlin, in 1979. This scholarly work of research answers basic questions that are not addressed in Weston's *History*.

I. Why did the Titicut Church in North Middleborough call a Connecticut farmer to be its pastor?

Isaac Backus grew up in Norwich, Conn. in a large family of eleven children. His father was a well-to-do farmer and community leader. Isaac worked on the farm and therefore was able to attend school only in the winter months. Consequently his formal education was limited to the elementary level. As a young man, he was strongly moved by the preaching of George Whitefield during the Great Awakening. Isaac felt that he himself was called to preach. In later years, there would be serious debates about the right of laymen to preach without the benefit of college training, but in Colonial days, itinerant ministers provided a popular source of ministerial service, and so Isaac Backus began a lifetime of travels of two to three weeks each, holding meetings in private homes. One of the circuits took him to Bridgewater, Raynham, and Titicut (North Middleborough). He was a large, impressive man who spoke with sincerity, and although the audience was small, he soon developed a loyal following.

In 1749 Isaac Backus married Susanna Mason of Rehoboth, and they lived in Bridgewater while Isaac negotiated to buy the thirty-two acre farm owned by James Keith in Titicut. He and Susanna made this farm their home for the rest of their lives, and here they raised a family of nine children. Thirty years later, he demolished the house and rebuilt on the same site. This second house still stands at 60 Plymouth Street.

Isaac was a good farmer. He raised sheep as well as grain crops to sell, and continued his work as an itinerant preacher, averaging about 2,000 miles per year on horseback. On his travels he sold iron tools and household goods made in local foundries and in his brother's ironworks in Connecticut. He also sold books that he had written and second-hand books that he bought in Boston.

The people of Titicut had often petitioned the Colony's General Court for permission to form a town of their own because they lived too far from the First Church at the Green to always attend services and town meetings as required. Although Titicut was never allowed to be a

separate town, in 1743 it was made a church precinct. The parishoners met in private homes while they slowly constructed a Congregational Meeting House. They had no settled pastor, so it was convenient to often ask their neighbor Elder Backus to preach, and gradually this was referred to as his church. When he was ordained and held the title of Reverend, he preferred to use the title of Elder which distinguished the clergy of minority churches from the leaders of the Established Churches.

II. Why did Elder Backus split the Titicut church and found a Separate Baptist Church in the community?

From the beginning there was friction between the "Old Lights" and the "New Lights" concerning questions of infant baptism and closed versus open communion. After years of soul searching, Elder Backus withdrew his membership from the Congregational denomination, and formed his own First Baptist (Separate) Church, an offshoot of the Standing Baptist Church. Apparently there were no hard feelings in the Titicut parish because he participated in an ordination service for a permanent minister, Solomon Reed, at the Congregational Church.

III. Why did Elder Backus, a minister and a farmer, enter the field of politics?

According to the New Colonial Charter of 1691 under William and Mary, the members of the four "Standing" Churches (Congregational, Baptist, Quaker, and Anglican) were exempt from the religious tax. However, all "Separate" Churches were still forced to pay the tax which supported the Established Churches. Those who refused to pay as a matter of conscience faced jail or seizure of their property. Elder Backus, who was now a member of a "Separate" congregation, became a crusader for freedom of religion for a political reason rather than for a religious reason.



THE BACKUS HOUSE in North Middleborough was built about 1780, but Elder Backus replaced the old farmhouse with this comfortable home, located at 60 Plymouth Street.

IV. Why did Elder Backus go to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia?

When the members of the Warren Association of Separate Baptist Churches unanimously asked Elder Backus to go to the Continental Congress to represent their interests and donated toward his expenses, he bought a horse, packed books in his saddlebag to sell along the way, and started for Philadelphia accompanied by Elder Gano and Elder Van Horn of the Association.

The three ministers didn't know how to present themselves to the Congress. Eventually sympathetic friends arranged a meeting with the Massachusetts delegates: Thomas Cushing, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, and any other people who wished to attend. When the delegates learned that the Baptists were seeking "freedom of conscience" that would exempt them from the religious tax, they were very cold to the Backus group. There were already many issues before the Congress concerning America's relations with England, and the Congress was trying to tread carefully so as not to make it impossible to reconcile the colonies to their mother country if they failed to obtain their objectives. Religion was an especially sensitive area that concerned the Established Church. Consequently Elder Backus came home with only a vague promise that the delegates would "endeavour to do all in their power to obtain a redress of our grievance." Nevertheless the issues of religious freedom and the separation of church and state had been brought to the attention of the American colonies.

V. What did Elder Backus "do" to earn national fame?

In the summer of 1779 the Middleborough Town Meeting voted to send Elder Backus as a delegate to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention that would create a permanent government for the State. It was most unusual to elect a minister to a political position, especially a minister of a minority church. This was Elder Backus' first elected position. It proves that he was held in high esteem throughout the town, and reflects the growing membership in the Baptist Churches in Middleborough.

Isaac Backus introduced two issues for the proposed Bill of Rights in the State Constitution: no bribery in elections, and the liberty of conscience (as freedom of religion was called), although the Convention members decided to follow John Adams and Robert Treat Paine in continuing the practice of religious taxes. In the years ahead, Elder Backus continued to fight with his pen for political equality for the members of all persuasions. He corresponded with leaders of all denominations throughout the thirteen states. Thus he became known as a Founding Father in moral matters throughout the U.S.A.

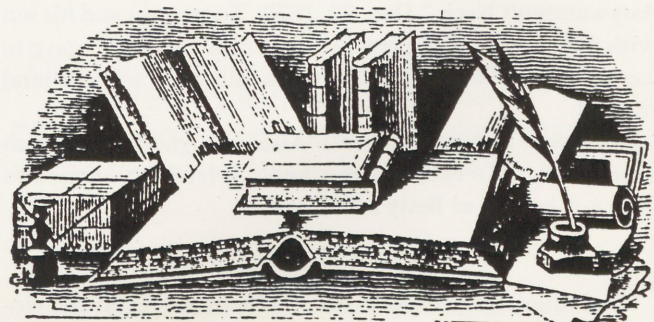
By 1787 the United States under the Government of the Articles of Confederation was disintegrating, and a new constitution was written. Middleborough sent four delegates to the Massachusetts convention to approve its adoption. Again Isaac Backus was chosen to go. He expected



THIS MEMORIAL to Elder Backus was placed in Middleborough's Titicut Cemetery in 1893 by the Old Colony Baptist Association.

to vote in opposition because there was no Bill of Rights to guarantee religious freedom, but after hearing the debate, he changed his mind, decided it was necessary at this time to preserve the Union, and he voted yes.

Elder Backus died in 1806 at the age of 82, and was buried in the Titicut Cemetery beside the site of his first church and within view of his home and farm. The Old Colony Baptist Association erected the imposing memorial of an open Bible on a pulpit. In addition to answering basic questions about Elder Backus, his *Diary* conveys a picture of everyday life in our town in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The extensive footnotes identify the people and events in Middleborough during these formative years. For our town, the *Diary* is a valuable resource.



Sampson's Tavern . . . A Local Landmark

By Elmore P. Haskins

One hundred and seventy-five years ago before the Eagle Tavern, later known as Sampson's Tavern, opened its hospitable doors, there was a hostelry near Assawampsett pond.

The name of the proprietor was Pamantaquash, chief of the local tribe of Indians and a favorite Sachem of Massasoit.

Assawampsett was the Indian name for "the place of the white stone."

When Massasoit went to visit his new found friends at Plymouth to sign the famous treaty, he doubtless consulted with Pamantaquash, dined on his samp, nokake and kippered herring.

After Massasoit came Philip; after Pamantaquash came Tuspaquin in the early deeds spelled Tispaquin, also called Watuspaquin.

He also entertained Princesses and kings, for one day the Indians who lived near King Philip's lookout, and what later became known as Betty's Neck, and near Sampson's Cove, were bidden to a wedding feast. Tuspaquin had married into the royal family and had chosen for his bride Piness Amie, daughter of Massasoit, the daughter of a king. With painted faces, adorned with feathers, beads and wampum belts, their weird cries resounding through the forest they danced their wedding dance before the wigwam of their chief.

Friendly to Whites.

Massasoit and Pamantaquash were kindred spirits; both were friendly to the whites. Philip and Tuspaquin, their sons, were also one in temperament and in motive, but they hated the settlers and together planned their extermination. Tuspaquin was a cruel savage and was one of Philip's most efficient chieftains in King Phillip's war. He was captured, taken to Plymouth, tried and executed. Tuspaquin pond and Squin brook perpetuate his name.

Daniel Ricketson writes, "Our river takes its rise in a richly wooded dell about ten miles from New Bedford and for some distance on its course is known by the humble name of Squin's brook, so-called from Watuspaquin, a noted Sachem of the Nemasket or Middleboro Indians.

In 1673, Tuspaquin and his son, William, gave to one John Sassamon, an Indian, 27 acres of land for a home lot at "Assawampsett Neck." Dec. 23, 1673, Tuspaquin and his son "with the consent of the chief men of Assawampsett" gave to Assawetough, daughter of John Sassamon, 58 acres of land adjacent.

The settlers changed the name "Assawetough" to the English name "Betty." To this day, the land not far from Sampson's Tavern is known as Betty's Neck.

A Noted Preacher.

The Indian, John Sassamon, was the most noted and eloquent preacher of his day. He had studied at Harvard and had assisted the Rev. John Elliot in translating the Bible into the Indian tongue. He had written letters for Philip at Mt. Hope

and was pastor of the Indian church at Assawampsett, at the head of Sampson's Cove.

Philip believed that Sassamon was informing the authorities at Plymouth of the plans that he was developing for the annihilation of the Colonists, and ordered his destruction.

One winter day in 1675, when Sassamon was fishing through the ice in Sampson's Cove, three Indians approached him. We can almost hear the conversation, with the courteous replies of the preacher regarding his success. We see them count the pickerel in the basket beside him. We see the stealthy savage step behind Sassamon and the foul blow that ended his life. These emissaries of Philip then concealed the body under the ice. There was, however, an actual witness to this deed, for a friendly Indian named Patuckson saw the tragedy.

Saw It from Lookout.

A little way up Highland road, the north boundary of the tavern land, is a hill known as King Philip's Lookout. It was from this eminence that Patuckson saw the deed, and so testified in the courts at Plymouth. A jury composed of 12 whites and five Indians, pronounced the prisoners guilty. Two were hanged; one upon confession was reprieved.

The execution of these two Indians so enraged Philip that he began his war of extermination a year sooner than he had intended.

One other event associates the tavern with King Philip's war.

South of the farm is a small stream of water that connects Assawampsett or Great Pond with Long Pond. Captain Benjamin Church, of Dartmouth, with his 40 men, 22 of whom were Indians, were fired upon at dusk one night, while crossing this brook. They chased their assailants into the swamp where in the gathering darkness the Indians escaped. Captain Church encamped that night on the farm of the late Sydney Nelson, in front of whose former residence is the sign "Nelson Homestead, 1714."

Later they were again fired upon by the scouts of Tuspaquin, and, not caring to risk an engagement, retired in the night toward Acushnet.

To the credit of the settlers of the towns of Middleboro and Taunton, be it said, that because of their humane treatment of the natives, King Philip ordered that the inhabitants of these towns should be the last to be destroyed.

Gradually Returned.

After the close of the war, during which every dwelling and nearly every building in Middleboro had been destroyed, the former settlers gradually returned.

On June 27, 1677, 68 of the former inhabitants and land-owners, "proprietors of the town of Middleberry" at a meeting in Plymouth, "agreed to make such orders and conclusions as may hopefully have a tendency unto the laying a foundation of a towne and pious society in that place."

Six years before King Philip's War, Middleboro had sepa-

rated from the town of Plymouth and in 1669 had become an independent township.

Its first town clerk was William Hoskins (now spelled Haskins), who held the office for 24 years. There was a salary attached for his record reads: "The town hath agreed that their Clarke shall have a load of fish (herring) brought to his field at Lakenham, at their charge, for his services the year past and so yearly as long as he remains their Clarke and to be brought in season."

Two hundred and fifty years afterwards his descendent, William Haskins held an important public office in the town of Middleboro, having first served 12 years as selectman and having been elected for three successive terms as a member of the Legislature.

After the destruction caused by King Philip's war, the town to whose foundation the 68 proprietors looked forward with so "hopeful a tendency" grew slowly. It was 120 years after the proprietors agreed "to make their orders and conclusions" before the tavern, or "ordinary" as it was then called, was opened by Elias Sampson, in 1798.

By 1770 this part of the town had increased in population more rapidly than any other portion, and had a large number of substantial houses of Colonial type. By 1800 it had more inhabitants than the present center of the town of Middleboro had at that date.

In the diary of Miss Rebecca Scollay we find:

"I remember my first visit to where is now the village of Four Corners.

Not a House There Then.

"There was not a house there then, there was several houses scattered on the way between there and Muttok village."

"Morton town was quite a neighborhood with a goodly number of houses. There was a tavern there, kept by Mr. Levi Wood and called Wood's Tavern."

"There was also a hall at the Morton house where the young used to assemble and have their dances and winter pastimes."

"This in 1775! It is hard to realize that the enterprising and flourishing Center of the town was then a densely wooded tract with a few houses at Court End." (Weston History).

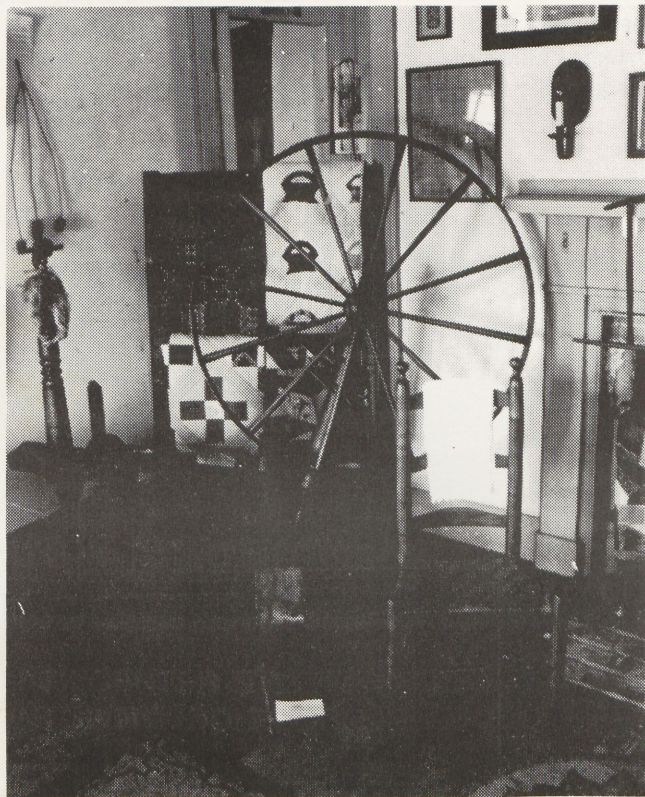
The Morton house was built soon after King Philip's War of 1676 and torn down in 1868 when it interfered with the straightening of the road.

It was not considered strong enough to be moved to a new location.

The lumber, however, was used in the construction of houses on Crossman street, as was the sound old timbers of the Pilgrim fort employed in the building of Harlow house, still standing, in Plymouth, on Sandwich street.

What a shrine this "venerable pile" would have made for the

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Sampson's Tavern...A Local Landmark

descendants of the Morton family, or a museum for the town of Middleboro, with the furniture of the period in its ancient rooms, the old ornaments upon its walls, and the simple furnishings in the attic, which was once occupied by the slaves belonging to its earlier owners.

The Sampsons were among the prosperous men of the colony from its very beginning. Henry Sampson, who came over in the Mayflower, was assigned land in 1623 and cattle in 1627. He owned a share in the "sixteen shilling purchase" when nearly all of the present town of Lakeville was bought for \$267.

Purchased by Mile.

We buy land by the rod and are assessed by the foot. Henry Sampson and his associates purchased their land by the mile.

In 1669, with three others he bought a tract, one and one half miles in length and one-half mile in breadth, this deed reads in part: "To all to whom these presents shall come, Wee, Tispiquin, alias Black Sachem, and William, Sonne of said Tispiquin, Indian Sachems, send greetings. We doe acknowledge ourselves Jointly and Severally payed and fully Sattisfide."

The line ran: "One and one-half mile from ye sd Dartmouth path into the woods and from ye said path to extend home to aforesaid pond wch pond is to be the bounds of one end of sd land."

Sproat's tavern, which entertained its guests for two centuries, and Putnam's Meeting House, nearby, were built on the land covered by this deed.

It contains the marks of Tispiquin — William his Sonne — The Samuel — Daniell ye Indian: the mark of old Harry ye Indian, not the first, nor the last time the Old Harry has made his mark and was signed by Wm. Crowe. Possibly the William Crowe whose tablet is the second oldest original stone on burial hill.

Abraham Sampson, who came over in 1630, was probably a brother of Henry, who came in 1620.

He was surveyor of the Colony of highways, constable, freeman of the Colony in 1654. He had five children. His grandson, Isaac, was the father of 11 children. His son, Uriah, father of Elias, who opened the tavern in 1798, also had 11 children.

Born Tavern Keepers.

This particular branch of the Sampson family were born tavern-keepers. They possessed that happy combination of genial, attractive personality combined with business ability that makes the tavern-keeper a success.

Their inn was not only popular, but its fine reputation reflected the high character of its proprietors.

The opening was an event in the neighborhood. The stage coaches had commenced to run daily between New Bedford and Boston the year before. The new Pond church was in a flourishing condition. This new venture was an added stimulus to the prosperity of this growing section of the town. Mr. Samp-

son's friends and neighbors looked forward to the long winter evenings with games of checkers; to neighborhood gossip over their pipes and cider; and to seeing frequent copies of Boston and New Bedford papers.

The soldiers in the neighborhood anticipated the pleasure of comparing experiences in the late war; for the War of the Revolution had ended but seven years before. Some had been in Captain Washburn's company of eight officers and 49 men, who enlisted from this section of the town for the relief of New Bedford when, in September, 1778, it was invaded by the British and its shipping and many of its buildings were burned.

An Old Advertisement.

There is an old advertisement which reads: "New Bedford stage sets off from Waltons and Gales, Bloomfield Lane, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 4 A.M., and arrives at New Bedford at 4 P.M.; leaves New Bedford, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at 5 A.M. and arrives in Boston at 4 P.M."

Mr. Abraham Russell's daily line of coaches ran upon the same scheduled time, except that they left New Bedford at four o'clock in the morning instead of 5 A.M.

The stages would arrive at "Sampson's" in time for a substantial breakfast; returning they would reach the tavern about noon time. The distance from New Bedford to Sampson's tavern was 14 miles; 52 to Boston. The fare was three dollars each way.

It was on these coaches that the first four-horse hitch ever seen in New Bedford was used. Mrs. Russell had seen such a team in Philadelphia, her native place, and the harnesses were made under her supervision. (Ricketson's History).



These were the days of small things, there were but 4,361 inhabitants in New Bedford in 1800. But our population gradually increased; there was more and more travel between the two cities, not only by public stage but by private conveyances.

The fine location of this tavern overlooking the largest body of fresh water in the State; its broad expanse fringed with forest

trees, the white cliffs gleaming in the sunlight on the farther shore, formed a picture that delighted its patrons. It was first known as the Eagle Tavern, and an iron eagle, still preserved; was fastened to an elm tree in front of the inn. This may have been made from iron taken from the ore bed in the pond, about a third of a mile from the shore, in front of the present Taunton pumping station. It is recorded that 500 tons of ore a year were lifted by tongs into boats later to be carted to iron furnaces in Middleboro and adjoining towns. This ore was superior in quality to the "bog ore" obtained from the swamps in the town.

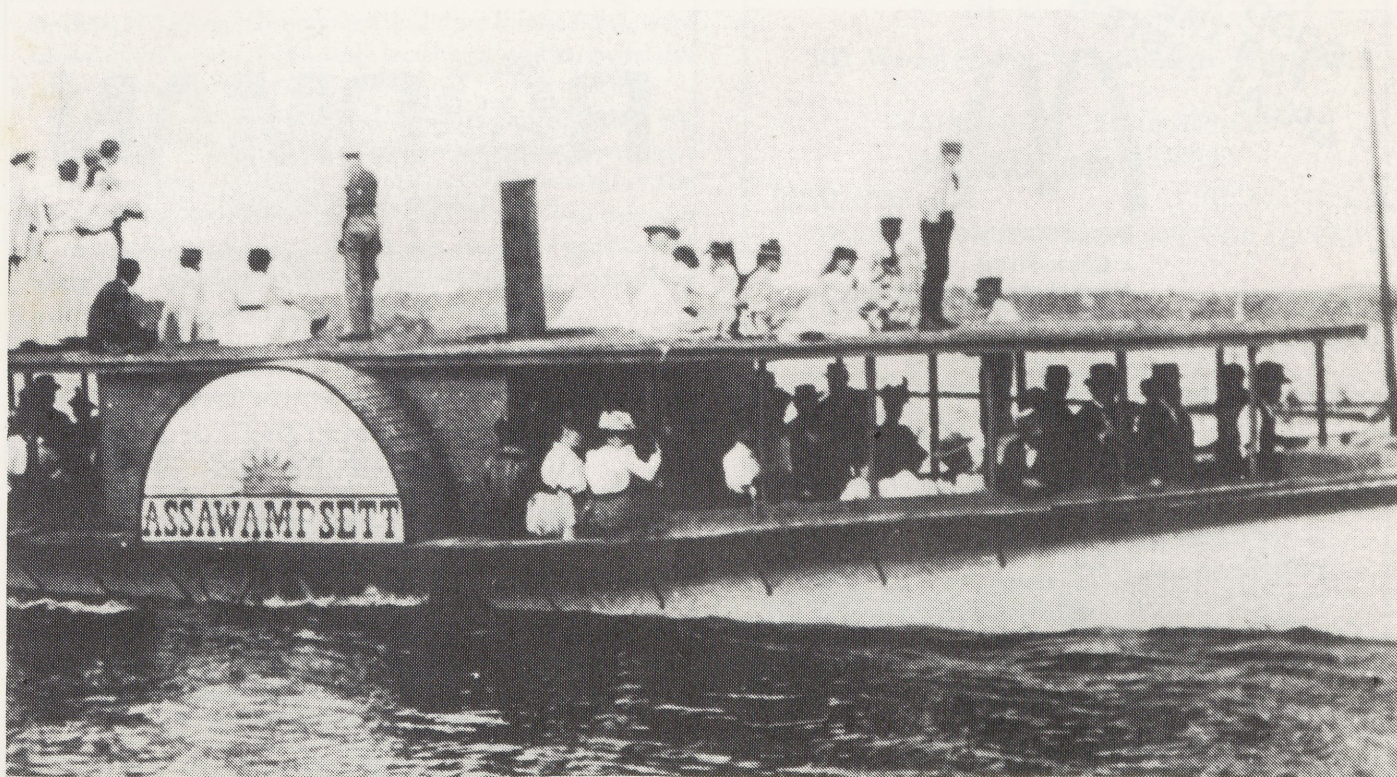
Sampson's was always a sportsman's tavern. Daniel Webster was an occasional guest and fished on Assawampsett pond. There were plenty of fish in the pond and plenty of game in the woods. Fox hunters, bird hunters, rabbit hunters gathered there.

In the cool autumn evenings through the smoke of the corn cob pipes, we can see the tired hunting dogs stretched out before the fireplace; we see the mugs of cider in a row upon the hearth. The number of quail and rabbits, the result of the day's sport, is counted over. After the mugs of mulled cider are emptied, the perch and pickerel caught during the day increase gently in size, and somewhat in number. One tremendous fish the largest in the pond, was hooked but got away! It was ever thus since the memory of man runneth not back thereto.

Reprinted from Old Dartmouth Historical Sketches, No. 51, the journal of the Old Dartmouth Historical Society. (April, 1921)

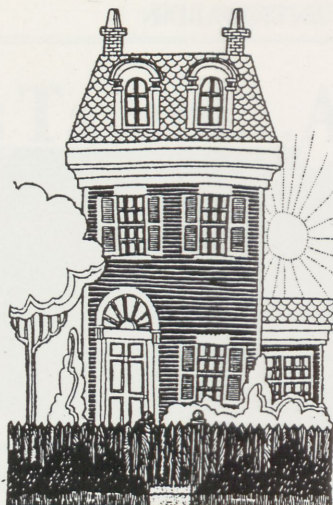


ON DISPLAY in the Lakeville Historical Museum are items such as this bed from Sampson's Tavern, torn down just after the turn of the century.



THE LARGEST BODY of fresh water in the state brought visitors from near and far to Lakeville over the years, with Sampson's Tavern being a favorite stopping point in the early days. Later, the steamer Assawampsett carried vacationers across the pond to enjoy cool summer breezes.

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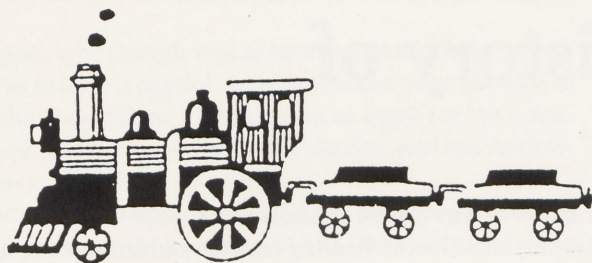
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The Tom Thumb Locomotive

be found. He then constructed his locomotive in a coachmakers shop and, because of its size, named it "Tom Thumb."

Peter Cooper did not intend his little locomotive for actual service, but rather to show the directors that, first, short turns could be made; and second, that rotary motion could be obtained without the use of a crank.

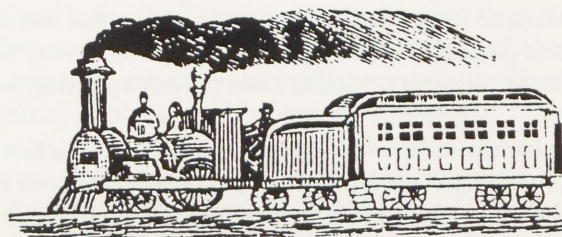
Finally, the Tom Thumb was ready. On Saturday, August 28, 1830, six men climbed aboard the engine and thirty-six more were towed in an attached car as Tom Thumb began the first trip by an American-built locomotive. In the one hour and twelve minute trip, it made an average grade of 18 feet to the mile.

It was on the return trip from Ellicott's Mills that an important event took place in railroad history. The Tom Thumb arrived at the halfway home point to be refueled. There, on the second track, was a horse hitched to an enclosed passenger car. Stockton & Stokes, who supplied the horses for the B&O, were fearful of the success of the steam locomotive and arranged this "race" to prove their worth.

Amidst cheers the two started neck and neck. The first advantage was to the horse whose power was used at the instant, while the little locomotive waited until the rotation of the wheels set the blower to work. When the horse had gained a ¼ mile on Tom Thumb, the engine valve lifted as clouds of steam blew and the pace increased. Soon the engine passed the powerful steed as shouts of hurrah went out.

But, just as the horse's driver was about to give up, a band for the pulley that drove the forced-draft blower slipped off the drum, and the safety valve ceased to scream. While the horse gained and passed the little locomotive Mr. Cooper tried again and again to replace the band. Although it was replaced, and the steam locomotive did its utmost to regain its lead, the horse had put too much distance between the two and became the winner.

All was not lost for Peter Cooper, who had proven his little engine did work. He adjusted the belt so as it would not slip off, and was on the rails again. For weeks Tom Thumb gave demonstrations on the railroad. Its 1.43 horsepower engine proved to be quite powerful as it managed to pull a load of 42 people, even up a slight grade!



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Rise To Fame...A History of Washington, D.C.

(Editor's Note: In the late 1700's, when Middleborough and Plymouth were already bustling New England communities, America's new leaders began work on an official capitol city and an accompanying mansion to be the official home of the President of the United States. This entertaining and informative article on Washington is excerpted from a report done by Elizabeth Snow of Carver, a past contributor to "The Middleborough Antiquarian" who is a long-time member of the Middleborough Historical Association.)

The centuries passed, the white man came and sailed up to the Potomac River, which was also known to the Indians as "Co-hon-go-roo-ta," to the Spanish as "Espiritu Santo," to the English as "Elizabeth," and to Lord Calvert's pilgrims as "St. Gregory."

The Indians drifted west under pressure of the pale face and a severe small pox epidemic. Today however, a tribe of Potomacs, numbering about a hundred and fifty, live forty-five miles from Washington.

History tells us that the first white men to explore this river of many names were Pedro Mendendez, who reached a point some twenty-five miles below Washington in 1571. In 1608, the renowned Captain John LSmith also entered the region, though he is not supposed to have actually landed upon Washington soil.

Twenty-one years later George Calvert received a royal charter from King Charles I. It was "that part of Virginia north and east of the Potomac River between 38 and 40 north latitude," which is now known as Maryland. In 1634 Calvert arrived in Chesapeake Bay and anchored near the mouth of the river. He soon went on a trip up-stream to establish good relations with the Indians. They were hostile however, and Calvert returned to settle "the Cittie of St. Mary," the first capital of Maryland. From this time on, colonization was rapid and peaceful. The manorial system prevailed and many of the most aristocratic families of the South established their home sin this region upon which the gods of earth had smiled.

The earlier homes were probably of a simple type, much like the story-and-a-half cottages of England. The district which later became known as Washington was called during the early period, "New Scotland Hundred." Each settler named his tract of land, appropriately or otherwise, for instance: "Argyle," "Lorne," "Rock of Dumbarton," "Green Hill," and "Widow's Mite."

"Long before towns began to have any importance in the region the social life of the great landowners was varied and delightful. Tobacco had brought vast walth to the gentlemen planters of Virginia and Maryland, and the abundance of slaves had given them ample time for leisure. The gentle folk lived much in the saddle, "thinking little fo riding five, ten, even more miles to pay a social call or to dine with a neighbor. Every house was a house of entertainment, for hotels were almost

unknown. Any decent stranger was sure of welcome." "Card parties, horse races, shooting matches, athletic sports, fencing and other gentlemenly tests of alterness and skill, river parties, hunting meets and riding matches etc.----all were pouplar in due season. The tables of gentlefolk gave evidence of abundance and good taste. Liquors were to be had in every variety and hospitality was so open and sincere that it was a rare day when some stranger did not sit at the family table. George Washington records that his family did not once sit down to dinner alone for twenty years."²

The small sprawling communities gradually grew into townships, some of which are today known as Annapolis, Alexandria, Georgetown, and Marlborough. The French and Indian Wars were fought, the Revolution came and the leaders of the ever-growing colonies realized the need for a central and staple government. After the wandering of the Continental Congress from Princeton to Annapolis, to Trenton and thence to New York, the members of the First Constitutional Convention decided that a wandering capital would be looked upon by foreign powers as a sign of weakness. They decided that the first Congress, elected under the new constitution should choose a permanent home for the government. This proved to be a difficult task, and became a matter of contention between the North and the South. It was agreed that a central location was indespensible that this "Federal Town" should be on a navigable river, yet inland far enough to be safe from foreign invaders. Disagreements arose as to the right of the nation to own land, and the amount of acerage upon which to build. New York had just remodeled its city hall for the use of Congress and saw no reason for Congress to move out. Robert Morris owned large tracts of land near Trenton and favored a site on the Delaware River. Others wanted to have two capitals, one in the Nor and one in the South, "with Congress oscillating like a pendulum between them."³

Maryland and Viginia offered a joint piece of land upon the Potomac. Virginia further offered Williamsburg, which was rejected as being too remote. The former comprised a y-shaped area formed by the junction of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The gently rolling land climbed slowly to meet the encircling hills. In the eastern section a plateau of eighty feet rose above the river, part of which was known as Jenkins Hill. Along the base of this hill through a marshy woodland flowed the Tiber Creek. At last through the efforts of Hamilton and Washington it was voted to accept this territory, a tract ten miles square.

It is here that Major L'Enfant entered the scene. He had followed Lafayette to America and had been acclaimed as an engineer in the Revolution. Following the war he engaged in civil work and thus became better acquainted with General

¹Nicolay, "Our Capital on the Potomac," p. 8

²W.P.A. "Washington," p. 39

³Nicolay, "Our Capital on the Potomac," p. 26

Washington, who though well of him. Learning that this new nation was to have a capitol, L'Enfant asked to be allowed to assist in the undertaking. Washington as agent for the enterprise, employed the Major to lay out the city, and one Andrew Ellicott to survey the boundaries.

The local landowners agreed to sell any land the government wished to purchase for buildings at \$25.00 per acre, to allow the rest of the city area to be divided into lots and sold, the proceeds of every other lot to be given to the government. It was further agreed that land needed for highways was to be free of charge.

L'Enfant began his planning and all went well 'till it was learned that his proposed streets were to be a hundred feet wide, avenues hundred sixty feet in width, with one "grand" avenue four hundred feet wide and a mile long. In fact fifty-four per cent of the area was to be devoted to streets and avenues. This plan immediately met with hearty disapproval from the residents round about who had an idea of making a little profit from the federal enterprise.

The politicians grumbled and Washington had difficulty in trying to persuade the landowners to sell. There was one Davy Burns who "would 'nae do business wi no one. The government offered \$125.00 an acre, and George Washington himself went to argue.

'Nae on ye life, mon,' said the irascible Mr. Burns.

Washington's thin lips tightened.

'Had not the Federal City been laid out here, you would have died a poor farmer, Mr. Burns,' he said.

'Aye, mon,' retorted the little Scotchman, 'an' had ye nae married the Widow Curtis ye would 'a' been a land-surveyor today, and a dom poor one a' that.'

Washington's dignity was greater than his sense of humor and he stalked away in a towering wrath. Next day he threatened to seize the property by right of eminent domain, and Burns capitulated and sold everything but his own small cottage which stood for years near the President's Palace, on the site now occupied by one of the loveliest buildings in Washington---the Panamerican Union."¹

L'Enfant would concede to no one and Washington finding it impossible to deal with him any longer, dismissed the "crazy Frenchman" in 1792. In planning the city L'Enfant had given careful consideration to the best sites for the most important buildings. The Capital was situated on Jenkins Hill, close to the center for the city area, which L'Enfant describes as "a pedestal waiting for a monument." The President's House he located one and a half miles to the northwest, near the marshlands along the Tiber Creek. He then fixed a site for a monument to Washington and designed a "Grand Avenue," the present Mall. He laid out a system of streets in the usual gridiron pattern and imposed upon them wide diagonal avenues or, "lines of direct communication." The intersections of two or more of these avenues he designated as state squares to be "equally distributed over the whole city." Jefferson is supposed to have named the first great avenues, and L'Enfant on the advice of the commissioners numbered and lettered the streets as they are today---those running north and south are numbered, while those running east and west are lettered. Other

features included a National Church, five fountains and grand cascade as the bottom of Capitol Hill and the canalization of Tiber Creek.

Let us look at Washington when the government first moved in. November, 1800---the officials entered the north wing of the capital, this being the only part completed. Secretary of the Treasury, Wolcott describes the scene, "There are few houses in any one place, and most of them small, miserable huts, which present an awful contrast to the public buildings. The people are poor and as far as I can judge they live like fishes, by eating each other. You may look in almost any direction, over an extent of ground nearly as large as the state of New York, without seeing a fence, or any object except brick-kilns and temporary huts for laborers."²

A mile away from the capital was the only other building of distinction, the "President's Palace," designed by James Hoban, and built of buff freestone similar to other large plantation homes of that day. This was also unfinished, and Abigail Adams is to be remembered for her willingness to make the most of "a beautiful spot, capable of any improvement."

It was in these early days that an Irish immigrant set up a harness making establishment and hung out a sign which read, "Peter Rodgers, Sadler from the green fields of Ireland and tyranny to the green streets of Washington and liberty."³

By 1814, the capital city might still have been called a "lodge in the wilderness," and it seems rather pathetic that the British found it necessary to destroy what little magnificence the city held. To their credit, their wrath was vented only upon the public buildings, the citizens being allowed the unhappy privilege of remaining in their homes to watch the conflagration.

That intrepid first lady, Dolly Madison, after saving the Declaration of Independence, silver and other valuables, including Stuart's picture of Washington, (which she cut out of the frame and wrapped in a tablecloth) was almost denied admission to a tavern in a nearby town, so unpopular was the President at this time.

In 1815 reconstruction work was begun. A new capital was built on the same site, while a new Executive Mansion rose within the first-blackened walls of the old. The walls had been so badly marked by fire that they were painted white, and people began to refer to the building simply as the White House, as is customary today. From this time until Civil War Days, little was done to improve the city. A few government buildings were added, population increased, and foreign diplomats were definitely impressed by the paradoxical appearance of the place and the crudities of the tobacco-chewing politicians.

"Washington is and always has been a city of extremes. For a long time it was a place of grandiose pretension and absurd realization, of marble halls and Negro hovels, of wide boulevards and slummy alleyways. The inhabitants also were a strange mixture of contrasts. There were the southern planters--aristocrats with their black slaves, long-haired congressmen from the Wild West in cowhide boots, scholarly New Englanders, shedding disapproval on all and sundry in Washington

¹Early, "And this Is Washington," p. 4

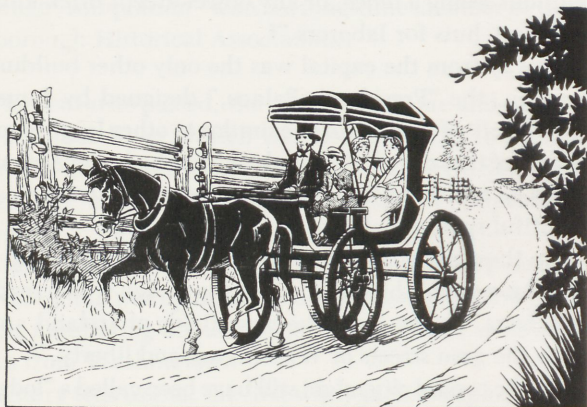
²W.P.A., "Washington," p. 47

³Ibid.

Rise To Fame . . .

like Hebrew prophets exiled in Babylon. Other exiles were the Irish immigrants with the smell of peat smoke still in their clothes, British travelers coming to poke fun at the place and its people, members of the diplomatic corps from all corners of the world, serving a term in what they all agreed was the most barbarous capital on the face of the earth."¹

¹Stevens, "Washington," p. 4



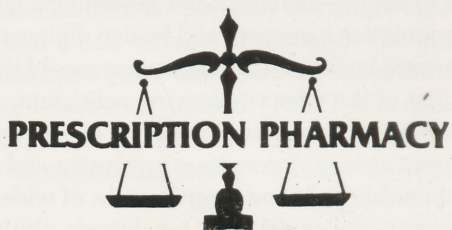
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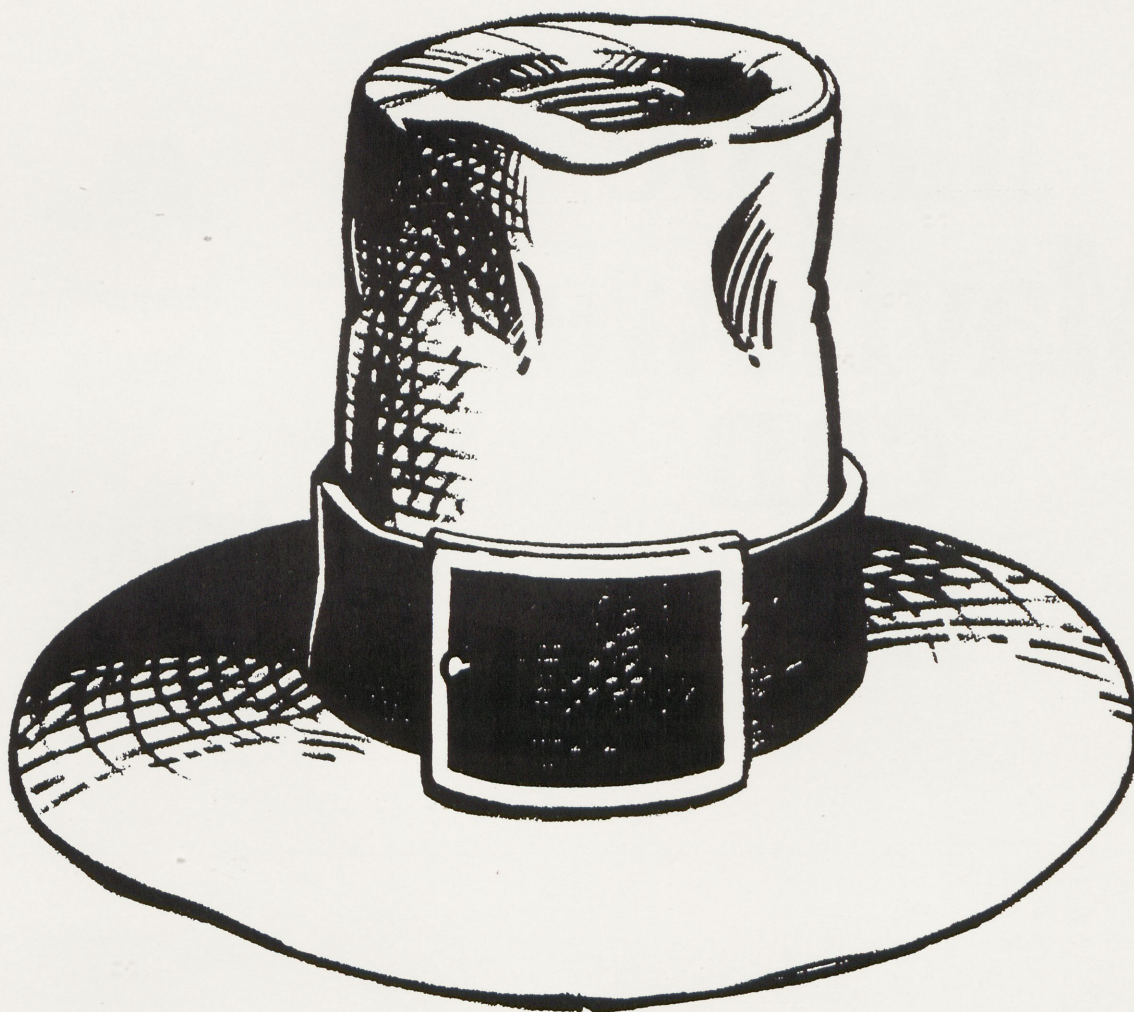
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